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AUTHOR	Cooper, Mildred P.
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ABSTRACT

A year-long project was initiated to establish an efficient information dissemination network for the District of Columbia public school system. The project's major objectives were: (1) to establish a systemwide task force; (2) to analyze existing dissemination activities; (3) to undertake staff development activities for task force members; and (4) to design a comprehensive dissemination program. A task force was assembled, consisting of persons who had major responsibilities for some aspect of information dissemination in the public school system. A subcommittee was formed to evaluate the fragmented and diverse dissemination activities already in existence. This Dissemination Status Subcommittee consulted experts in the dissemination field and arranged for members of the task force and project staff to observe dissemination projects in other states and to attend meetings about the use of dissemination. Identification was made of major target populations within the school system towards whom current information was directed. The Staff Development Subcommittee advised the task force on short and long term strategies for coordinating and developing improved information resources, linkages, and leadership in dissemination activities. The task force received input from the principal heads of the central administration's divisions and offices. To assess the needs of the total target population, a questionnaire was sent to classroom teachers, support staff, school principals, and local, regional, and central school administrators. A proposal was submitted in 1979 to the National Institute of Education seeking funding for the implementation of the dissemination model that the task force developed. Appended to this report is the survey questionnaire, an abstract of the dissemination proposal, a resource flow chart, and the dissemination model. (JD)

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FINAL REPORT

PROJECT NO. 7-0028
GRANT NO. NIE G 78 0011

DISSEMINATION SPECIAL PURPOSE PROJECT

MILDRED P. COOPER, PROJECT MANAGER
DIVISION OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20004

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SEPTEMBER, 1979

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VINCENT E. REED
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Washington, D. C.

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ABSTRACT
Developing a Design for a
Comprehensive Dissemination
Program for the D. C. Public Schools

With nearly two hundred schools and more than 125,000 students, the D. C. Public School System is the fourteenth largest in the country. The large number of minority and disadvantaged students presents major challenges to the professional staff in the design implementation of effective instructional programs. The school system has several dissemination activities which are addressed to providing professional staff with information about programs and practices designed to meet the special needs of a disadvantaged population. Currently, however, insufficient communication between units and the lack of a comprehensive design for dissemination has impeded the full development of the dissemination capability of the school system.

The purpose of this project is to develop a design for a comprehensive dissemination program and to establish the organizational readiness to implement it. The major process objectives of the project are summarized as follows: (1) Establish a System-wide Dissemination Task Force (2) Analyze existing dissemination activities throughout the school system (3) Undertake staff development activities for Dissemination Task Force members (4) Design a comprehensive dissemination program for the school system emphasizing two-way communication

The accomplishment of the above objectives is expected to yield the following benefits: The Task Force will provide a mechanism for communicating dissemination needs and problems and will serve as a vehicle for preparing policy recommendations with reference to dissemination for decision-makers. A thorough analysis of existing dissemination activities and services will serve to identify areas of fragmentation, duplication and service gaps. With training, members of the Task Force can share new knowledge and experiences with other staff so as to "locate" the move for improvement within the school system rather than with outside experts. Finally, it is expected that the final design will result in a more coordinated and efficient dissemination plan for the school system which will identify how the several units can work toward common dissemination objectives while retaining organizational integrity. The efficiency and effectiveness resulting from coordination of effort would enable the school system to support the program as federal funds are reduced over the implementation period.

INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of the Problem

The District of Columbia Public School System, committed to a "mission of excellence. efficiency, and effectiveness," has been aware of the need for a unified network of dissemination activities to assist in the provision of quality education for all students. The DCPS over the years has had numerous major dissemination activities; however, these have been fragmented and, to an extent, independent of each other. In many instances there has been duplication or overlap. In the interest of efficiency and effectiveness, the unification of dissemination activities became a priority need.

In 1978, in an effort to develop a unified, comprehensive education resource and technical dissemination system to improve both management and instructional practices, the DCPS submitted to NIE a one year special purpose grant proposal. The two-way collaborative effort that was presented would result in a network combining the diverse and fragmented activities into a workable system of information exchange.

As stated in the proposal the following were the major objectives of the special purpose project:

1. To establish a school systemwide Task Force;
2. To analyze existing dissemination activities;
3. To undertake staff development activities for Task Force members; and
4. To design a comprehensive dissemination program for the District of Columbia Public Schools, emphasizing two-way communication among personnel.

The ultimate goal would result in easy access to all information within the school system so that the range of persons from the Board of Education members to the classroom teachers would have available at all times the assurance of quality educational resources for all students.

B. Procedures

Under the supervision of the Vice Superintendent of the DCPS and the Assistant Superintendent of the Division of Research and Evaluation as project manager, the following were the procedures used to accomplish the four objectives stated above.

A Task Force consisting of persons in the DCPS who had major responsibilities for some aspect of dissemination of information was assembled by the project manager and the staff of the Division of Research and Evaluation (DRE) responsible for the project. The staff of DRE directly assigned to the Special Purpose Project were a project coordinator and a research assistant. It was determined that the Task Force would have, of necessity, not only members representative of all sectors of the school system but also be of sufficient position level to be able to make decisions that would coordinate the fragmented and diverse dissemination activities already in existence into a well structured and effective comprehensive unified design.

Initially, the Task Force accepted the responsibility to pursue the mandate of the project and engaged in a series of discussions of the dissemination problems of the units represented. This was accomplished by a series of monthly meetings convened by the project manager. When necessary, the meetings were held more often.

The Task Force concluded that essential to the success of two-way unification of dissemination of information were the following:

1. The need to communicate educational problems, solutions, and information among educational practitioners, decision-makers, and knowledge producers; and
2. The need to facilitate rational consideration and appropriate utilization of the outcomes of research and development, efficient educational practice and other knowledge that can be used for the improvement of education.

After much discussion the Task Force adopted a definition of dissemination that led to a consideration of several systems for dissemination, with four components essential to dissemination:

- Information
- Linkage
- Incentives
- Management

Information would, therefore, be disseminated in a particular way determined by the nature of the material, the target populations, and the purpose for which it is disseminated. Ultimately, the four components should logically lead to an increase of knowledge to the practitioner and facilitate knowledge utilization.

The Task Force decided to establish two subcommittees in order to accomplish objectives two and three of the project--namely, analysis of existing dissemination activities and staff development.

The Dissemination Status Subcommittee agreed to pull together the information on the fragmented and diverse activities in existence. The Staff Development Subcommittee would utilize experts in the field of dissemination and arrange for members of the Task Force and project staff to visit dissemination projects in other States and/or attend meetings that are involved in the utilization of dissemination.

C. Problems Encountered

The project, due to circumstances beyond the control of DRE, encountered the following problems which delayed the actual start of the project. As a result of these problems, approval was given to extend the Special Purpose Grant through September 1979.

1. The amount of time needed to process the grant through the various units of the school system and the District of Columbia Government in order to establish the financial accounts for the project and to hire staff was extensive. The D.C. Gov't. and the school system were in the process of setting up a new Financial Management System, thus the usual business procedures became very complex.
2. The DCPS System was involved in a teachers' strike which prevented the Task Force from meeting on schedule due to the members of the Task Force being assigned to classroom teaching duties for the duration of the strike.

D. Results

The four objectives of the Special Purpose Grant stated, in Section A were accomplished in the following manner:

The Task Force which was established consisted of the following top level administrators in the school system:

Elizabeth R. Yancey, Vice Superintendent, DCPS

Mildred P. Cooper, Assistant Superintendent, DRE and Special Purpose Grant Manager

Janet Caldwell, DRE, Coordinator of Project

Richard Childs, DRE, Research Assistant for Project

Joseph Renard, Executive Assistant, Office of Educational Accountability

Latinee Gullattee, Executive Assistant, Office of Instruction

Olive Covington, Director of Communications and Public Relations

Harry Burke, Director Media Center

Olive DeBruler, Director Library Services

Grace Davis, Director-Grants Administration

James Ruff, Assistant to Director, Grants Administration

J. Weldon Greene, Director-Program Planning

Roger J. Fish, Assistant to Director-Program Planning

Roberta Palmer, Deputy Assistant-Region III

Erika Robinson, Coordinator-Research Information Center, DRE

Betty Johnson, Assistant for Board of Education Business

The Task Force met monthly and, when necessary, more often to:

1. Become aware of the purposes of the grant as advised by members of the Grant Administration of the DCPS, and
2. Analyze various dissemination activities already in operation.

The Dissemination Status Subcommittee identified the following major target populations internal to the school system, towards whom current information is directed:

1. Board of Education
2. Central Administration
3. Region Offices
4. Local School Administration
5. Teacher, Librarian, Counselor
6. General staff, Secretaries, Clerks, Aides, etc.
7. Students
8. Parents
9. Community

The dissemination of information in the DCPS was carried out through the following agents:

1. Competency-Based Curriculum Center
2. Research Information Center
3. Teacher Center
4. Library Services Professional Library
5. State Facilitator Program
6. The Media Center
7. Grants Administration
8. Adult Education Dissemination Center
9. Communication and Public Relations Branch
10. Special Education Center

The results of the Staff Development Subcommittee were as follows:

1. Consultants advised the Task Force on short and long term strategies for coordinating and developing improved information resources, linkages, and leadership in dissemination activities. The four consultants were: Dr. John Hayman, Project Developer and Director of the Alabama Information and Development System; Mr. Richard A. Brickley, Director of Research and Information Service and Pennsylvania State Facilitator for the National Diffusion Network; Dr. Freddie Richards, Coordinator of Human Research Development Program, Birmingham, Alabama; and Dr. Samuel Stewart, Superintendent of Schools, Ridgewood, New Jersey, and consultant to the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development.

2. Five-year plans for existing Dissemination Capacity Building Projects were reviewed: e.g., Texas, Alaska, Montana, Illinois, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, New York, and Connecticut. For the most part this was accomplished through the utilization of the ERIC capability housed in the Research Information Center of DRE. Also, the DRE had access to the latest findings in dissemination nationally via the Lockheed DIALOG System. Various strategies and methods were identified for conducting needs assessment in dissemination, with particular emphasis on management of dissemination activities as evidenced by surveys, operations, procedures, and organizational charts from Texas, Alabama, Pennsylvania, Alaska, Delaware, Illinois, Montana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Idaho, Missouri, Nebraska, and Tennessee.

3. To expand their knowledge of the field, Task Force members visited and/or attended meetings as follows:

   - Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland Oregon
   - Merrimack Education Center, Chelmsford, Massachusetts
   - National Dissemination Forum
   - AERA National Convention
   - State Dissemination Leadership Conference in Bloomington, Minnesota
   - DIALOG and ERIC Workshops

To assure that the comprehensive design was complete and would achieve its purpose, the Task Force received the input and insight of the principal heads of the divisions and offices of central administration. To assess the needs of the total target audience and to have a comprehensive design

that would indeed reflect the needs of a dissemination network in the D.C. Public Schools, the Task Force and project staff of the Division of Research and Evaluation prepared and distributed a questionnaire entitled "Information Needs and Uses" (Appendix A). Input from classroom teachers, support staff, local school administrators, regional administrators, and central administrators was solicited by way of the survey questionnaire. The questionnaires were mailed to school principals, regional administrators, and central administrators. Five questionnaires were sent to each of the 194 elementary and secondary public schools in the District of Columbia. Principals were requested to complete one questionnaire and to select randomly classroom teachers, resource teachers, librarians, and counselors to complete the remaining four questionnaires. The purposes of this questionnaire were to--

1. Investigate the status of current dissemination agents at work in the school system.
2. Evaluate the success of these dissemination outlets.
3. Identify levels of school personnel needing information distributed through dissemination sources, e.g., who are the users in the school system.
4. Identify what assistance in getting information is needed for the various levels of school personnel, but is not available at present; and
5. Assess needs for information of school personnel and their success in obtaining the needed information.

The final objective of the special purpose grant was "to design a comprehensive dissemination program for the DCPS, emphasizing two-way communication between personnel." To fulfill this objective the project staff

of DRE and the Task Force developed a proposal for a two-way dissemination system entitled, "The Improvement of Educational Practice Through the Systematic Two-Way Dissemination Program in the District of Columbia Public Schools." This proposal was then submitted to the State Dissemination Grants Program NIE for funding. Briefly described, the proposal's aim is to implement a systematic design which will provide for the access and utilization of research program information by school personnel and the Board of Education members. An abstract of the proposal will be found in Appendix B.

E. Conclusions

The Task Force, as a result of a complete study of dissemination activities in the various units in the DCPS, acquired much knowledge of the concepts of dissemination.

The Task Force, as a result of investigation into various dissemination activities nationwide, acquired the skills to adapt the various approaches to dissemination and to take these skills and apply them to the particular needs of the DCPS.

The Task Force was also able to knowlegeably take the various approaches to dissemination and rationally come to an agreement that the approach to dissemination of research information can only be successful when the activities are such that there is two-way communication with responsible agents or units within the network working together.

Another outcome of the Task Force was the conclusion that the submission of the proposal to NIE would make it possible to improve school practices if some funding were made available. A proposal, therefore, was developed and submitted in July 1979 to NIE.

Appendix C displays a Resource Flow Chart that reflects the present flow of resources in the DCPS and the proposed flow of resources in the

DCPS that would result in a unified network of dissemination activity as a conclusion of the endeavors of the Task Force.

Appendix D displays a dissemination model, which the Task Force developed in order to show the complexity of a network of information.

In view of the need to improve the quality of education and the concerted effort to bring together the fragmented dissemination activities in the DCPS for this purpose, there is no doubt that the Two-Way State Dissemination network is a key factor in helping the DCPS to achieve its "mission of excellence, efficiency, and effectiveness."

APPENDIXES

District of Columbia Public Schools

INFORMATION NEEDS AND USES

A Survey of Educators
in the D.C. Public Schools

The D.C. Public Schools Dissemination Task Force is presently reviewing the need, flow and use of information intended to improve the practices of its educators. This questionnaire is designed to solicit your thoughts concerning your need for and use of the best available current information in the past school year with regard to your professional responsibilities.

Background information: Please put a check to the right of the appropriate response.

Name: _____ School or Office: _____

Position:

Principal	___
Librarian	___
Counselor	___
Classroom Teacher	___
Resource Teacher	___
Central Adm.	___
Regional Adm.	___
Other	___
Specify	_____

Educational Level:

Less than bachelor's degree	___
Bachelor's degree or equiv.	___
Master's degree	___
Doctorate degree	___
Post graduate	___

Professional experience in education:

0 - 2 years	___
3 - 5 years	___
6 - 9 years	___
10 years +	___

Years experience in present system:

0 - 2 years	___
3 - 5 years	___
6 - 9 years	___
10 years +	___

1. Please share with us your experiences during the past school year with regard to information needs and obtainment. Check in the left response column your frequency of need for information and in the right column your frequency of success in securing the needed information.

FREQUENCY OF NEED					SITUATION/OCCASION/TASK	FREQUENCY OF SUCCESS IN OBTAINING NEEDED INFORMATION				
Frequently	Fairly Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never		Frequently	Fairly Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
					Developing daily lesson plans					
					Writing proposals					
					Developing or revising curriculum					
					Formulating policy recommendations					
					Carrying out committee assignment					
					Developing rules/regulations					
					Writing or revising curriculum guide					
					Planning/conducting inservice					
					Designing new instructional programs					
					Developing rationale/position statement					
					Preparing speech/presentation/ article					
					Updating teaching/instructional methods and techniques					
					Securing innovative ideas for improvement					
					Conducting research for academic course work or degree					
					Investigating promising programs/ practices					
					Identifying exemplary administrative/management practices					
					Seeking improved classroom management and/or discipline techniques					
					Other (specify) _____					

II. In this section we need to know the sources on which you depend for securing new ideas and knowledge in connection with your professional responsibilities. Please tell us to what extent you rely on each of the following sources for this purpose.

	Extensive	Considerable	Limited	Very Little	Not At All
Discussions with teachers in your school/school system					
Discussions with administrators/ supervisors in your school/ school system					
Reading professional journals/ publications					
Attending meetings sponsored by professional organizations/ associations					
Attending meetings/conferences/ workshops					
Informal contacts with university/ college faculty					
Participating in school system professional development (inservice) experiences					
Discussions with educators in other school systems					
Enrolling in college/university courses and/or special workshops					
Discussions with consultants					
Using information centers					
Using school and public libraries					

III. We are interested in knowing your experience with information sources. Please indicate by checking in the appropriate columns the following: your familiarity with the source; your use of the source; and the value of the source to you.

Source	Familiar with		Have used		If used, the value to me was:		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Great	Some	None
Research Info. Center (RIC)							
Public School Libraries							
Univ. Libraries							
CBC Center							
D.C. Teacher's Center							
D.C. State Facilitator Project							
Other Info. Ctrs. (specify)							

IV. Listed below are types of assistance that could be offered to you in your job-related information seeking. Please check those types of assistance you need and would use, if available.

I could use assistance in:

_____ concisely stating my information requests
_____ collecting and organizing new information
_____ translating my problems into informational and resource needs
_____ increasing my awareness of available information services
_____ installing a new procedure or practice
_____ interpreting and using information
_____ referring me to other helpful resource centers

Are there other needs? Please specify.

V. In the space provided below, please elaborate on any question included in the questionnaire. However, be sure to indicate the number of the question before your narrative.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.

Prepared by
Dissemination Project
Division of Research and Evaluation
September 1979

The intent of this proposal for a capacity building dissemination grant is to establish a network uniting the various dissemination efforts in the D.C. Public Schools and to complement these efforts where needed.

Three theory propositions formulate the rationale for this network. In essence, the goal of improvement of educational practice through problem-solving is directly related to:

1. The need for current knowledge;
2. The need for an interactive change model; and
3. The need for personal interactions and face-to-face communication.

The specific program objectives may be summarized as follows:

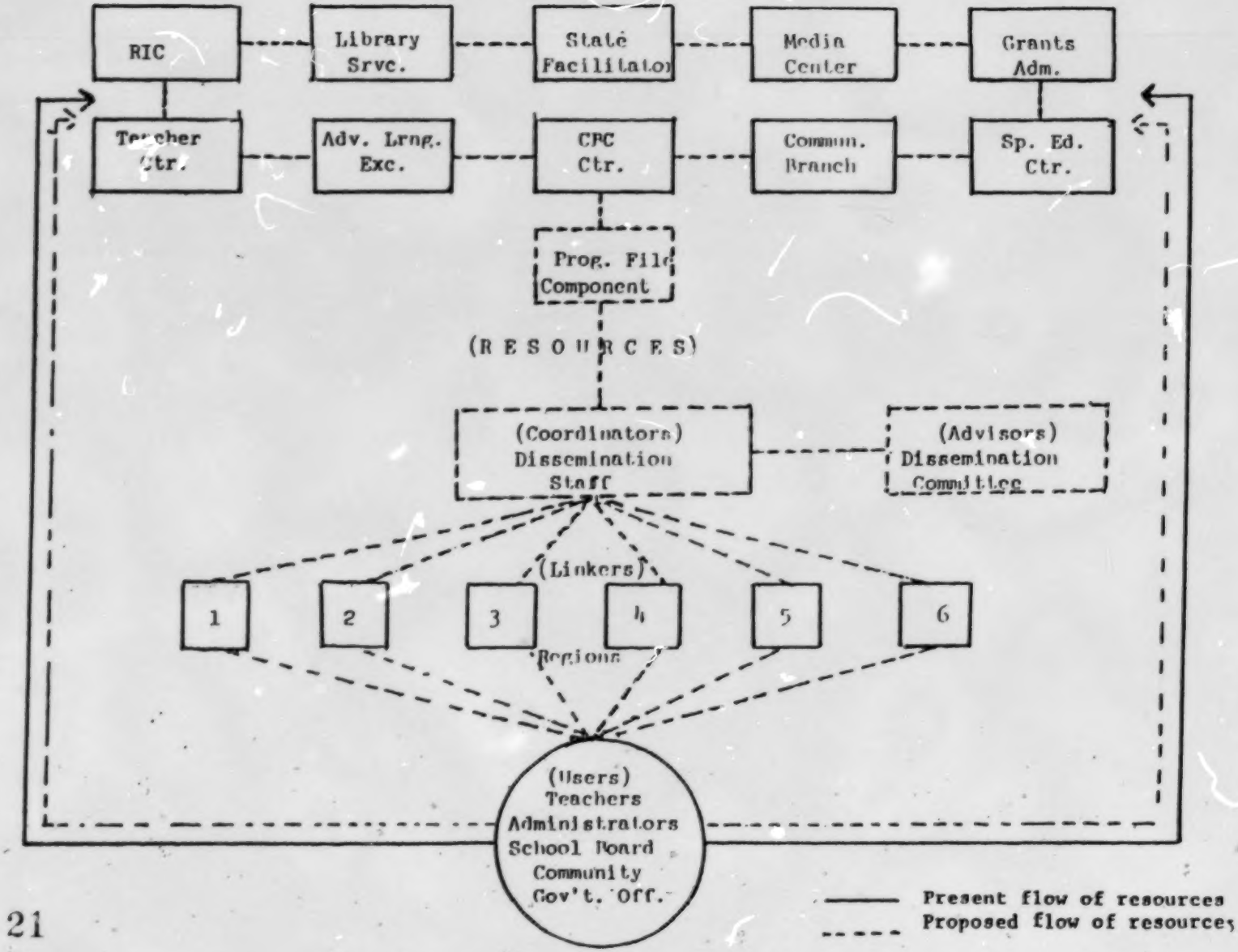
1. To develop a unified dissemination system;
2. To establish and train a unit for coordination;
3. To support the improvement of instruction and learning through direct services to practitioners;
4. To designate and train individuals as information linkers;
5. To build a program file;
6. To develop a dissemination network as a component of the proposed Decision Support System (DSS); and
7. To provide for evaluative feedback and continuous assessment of the system.

Within the three-year developmental period, the system will evolve from five general activity groups, which include: Establishing a dissemination system; providing training for personnel; developing an internal resource base; building a network for information exchange; and evaluating the program.

The well planned, well coordinated, and well publicized implementation of these activities should contribute significantly to the D.C. School System's "mission of excellence, efficiency, and effectiveness." Further, the identification and dissemination of successful adoptable/adaptable programs unique to a large urban school system may eventually aid many youth within the District of Columbia and be replicated in like systems nationwide.

PROPOSED D.C. PUBLIC SCHOOLS DISSEMINATION SYSTEM

Resource Flow Chart



Dissemination Model